22: Guillemard T-2 (1882) 1886 Kamchadal

000 load. The last string was in charge of our new man, who, overcome by the "damnable iteration" of a birch-forest, fell asleep and tumbled off his horse. In his fall, unfortunately, he dislodged some of the loose packs, which, swinging under the horse's belly, started it off at full speed. Dashing wildly forward the frightened animals caught the others in rear, upsetting Vodki and communicating the stampede to the whole line. We were at the time in thick forest, and plunging into this, our cavalcade rapidly disappeared in all directions, various ominous crackings alone revealing their line of progress. When separate individuals of a string try to pass on different sides of the same tree a startling effect is very often produced, but the old and experienced packhorse knows that better results may be obtained by the navigation of a three-foot passage between two birches. We found Ivan supporting his head in both hands, and proceeded to administer a lecture and surgical relief. Vodki, by the really masterly and exhaustive manner in which he was exhibiting the expletive richness of the Russian language, was evidently not in a condition to require attention. There is always, happily, a comical side to these affairs, which makes the traveller regard "the most disastrous chances" to his baggage with tolerable equanimity.

712 / R 177 . 71 — We pitched camp about twelve or fifteen miles from Narchiki, a little village that in bygone days was one of the palisaded *ostrogs* of the Russians; and though close to a pretty and most likely-looking stream, we were unable to catch any fish for supper, for the first and only time during our ride to the river.

224 / 438 / 443 / 452 / 563 — In most bush countries it is the hunter's rule to see that the fire is extinguished, or at least rendered harmless, before breaking camp. In Kamschatka the greatest care is taken about this, as bush-fires invariably cause the sables to desert the neighbourhood for many miles around. As my readers are perhaps aware, the fur of this animal is the most valuable export of the country, and a very large proportion of the inhabitants are employed for the greater part of the year in sable-hunting only. The price obtained by the hunter

22: Guillemard T-2 (1882) 1886 Kamchadal

224 438 443 452 563 for the skins varies very much if these be sold separately. But generally the season's catch is disposed of *en masse*, and a fixed price paid per head, whether good, bad, or indifferent. By far the greater part of the trade lies in the hands of the individual I have alluded to under his title of the King of Kamschatka. That he was by no means beloved of his subjects was abundantly evident, but his power was so great that but few were able, even if they dared, to shake off the hold he had upon them. As the owner of what was, practically, the only store in Petropaulovsky, the natives became easily indebted to him, their account for goods supplied being invariably in excess of the amount allowed for the furs brought for disposal. They are thus, we were informed, obliged to bring the catch of the following season to the same market, where, owing to the absence of competition, the prices are by no means high. If the corresponding profit upon the flour, cloth, and other goods sold be taken into consideration, it will be seen that, with a little capital and an elastic conscience, a fur-trader in Kamschatka ought not to do badly.

435 563 In St. Petersburg the price of a single sable-skin ranges from £2 to £25. In Kamschatka the wretched peasant, living upon half-rotten fish and exposed to the rigours of a climate which, in its severity, surpasses that of almost every inhabited region of the world, receives, nominally, an average of sixteen roubles[1] per skin. In reality, as I have stated, he has to take out this value in 273 goods. He is wise if he does so, and can keep clear of the brandy, 435 which, in spite of the law which forbids its sale anywhere but R in Petropaulovsky, has proved the ruin of so many of his country- 177 men.

.27 The price of other skins is generally settled individually. A fairly good bear's skin fetches about three or four roubles. It is only the very finest and largest that will bring as much as seven roubles. A river otter, if in good condition, is valued at the latter

[1] The Russian paper rouble is worth nearly half-a-crown; the silver rouble about three shillings and sixpence.

[see page 74--analyst]